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THE PHILLIPS EXETER ACADEMY—AN AMERICAN SCHOOL.

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DR. JOHN PHILLIPS, founder of The Phillips Exeter Academy, was a somewhat remarkable man. He was educated as a minister, and had, in his youth, the reputation of being "a devout, zealous, animated, and pathetic preacher." He became a successful merchant, and in the latter part of his life he "employed his capital in making loans on interest." He went to Exeter as a schoolmaster, and his first taxes were four shillings and two-pence. He became one of the leading citizens of the province, and the richest man in a very substantial and prosperous community. At the age of twenty-four, he married a wealthy widow of forty-one, whose daughter had just rejected him, and by all accounts the marriage was a happy one. He was no revolutionist, yet he kept the respect of his fellow-citizens throughout the War of Independence, and the verdict of history acquits him of offensive Toryism. He was shrewd in business and notably frugal in personal expenditure; but he never forgot what was due to his dignity as a man and a gentleman. Indeed, he seems to have been somewhat precise in exacting the tribute of respect from his younger contemporaries. He insisted, we are told, that every boy should touch his hat and every girl should drop a courtesy on passing his house, if he happened to be visible, as he often was, pacing up and down on the platform in front of it. Tradition reports that he was an austere man, and it is not unlikely that he insisted on prompt payments. Yet one who knew him speaks feelingly of "the patriarchal sweetness of his countenance." He was far from popular, but he was universally respected, and his integrity and high principle were never questioned. Altogether,

he was a man of strong character and marked individuality, who always knew exactly what he was about. Old New-Englanders, at all events, will recognize the type. It is a type that has had no small share in framing the destinies of our country.

What has just been said of Dr. Phillips, however, gives a very imperfect idea of his character, though it may suggest his personality. One element of the first importance remains to be mentioned: he was, like most Americans, an idealist. More than that, he was an enlightened idealist; he planned instead of dreaming, and he accumulated with patient frugality the means that enabled him to carry out his plans. There is something uncommonly stimulating in the record of Dr. Phillips's benevolent projects. They were not external to the rest of his life, nor was there anything casual about them. They were the spontaneous, though deliberate, expression of his attitude of mind. Those were the days when men were in the habit of writing down their thoughts for their own inspection, and one significant memorandum of Mr. Phillips's (he was not then "Dr.") has been preserved: "Being sensible that a part of my income is required of me to be spent in the immediate service of God, I therefore devote a tenth of my salary for keeping school, to pious and charitable purposes." This note was made shortly after his graduation from Harvard College, and when he had just given up his intention of devoting himself to the ministry. But the purpose which it expressed was not abandoned when he became a rich man. It only strengthened as he grew older. In 1762, when he was about forty years of age, he wrote to his brother Samuel with regard to "a united effort in our family, for doing some special service for God." He asks him to consult with their father and their other brother, and adds these touching and impressive sentences:

"Our parents designed and educated us to serve Christ personally in the work of the ministry; our time has been otherwise employed; our other labors by his blessing succeeded. May our God have the fruits of them for the carrying to an end the same blessed work by such whom he shall please to send."

It was natural that John Phillips should apply his thoughts to the advancement of education. He was, like his father and his great-grandfather, a graduate of Harvard College. His earliest ancestor in this country, the Rev. Samuel Phillips, who came over with Winthrop in 1630, had studied at the University of Cam-

bridge. Learning was a family tradition. John Phillips had no children and his relatives were in easy circumstances, so that he felt free to follow his inclination in the bestowal of his goods. It was in 1770, apparently, that he began his systematic career of intelligent giving for educational purposes. The first beneficiary was Dartmouth College. His gifts to this institution, though not large, were important. They determined the location of the college at Hanover, and they procured the foundation of a Professorship of Divinity. In 1777, he was honored with the degree of LL.D.—the second conferred by Dartmouth. In 1778, he joined his brother in endowing the Phillips Academy at Andover, his native town. This institution received its charter in 1780, and in the next year the legislature of New Hampshire incorporated The Phillips Exeter Academy, which was Dr. Phillips's own foundation, in the town where he had resided for the greater part of his life. His gifts to the Academy at Exeter during his lifetime and by his will (he died in 1795) aggregate about \$60,000—a very ample sum for those days, and one that, in the language of Governor Bell,* should be estimated in the light of what it has since accomplished. It was far greater than any sum which had been devoted to a similar endowment in America at that time.

It is noteworthy that Dr. Phillips gave away a large share of his fortune before he died. This was partly a matter of conscience, as we have seen. In part, however, his action must have been dictated by his wish to shape the policy of the Academy himself. He was more than a benefactor; he was a practical teacher, and he had a definite theory of American education. Further, he was an excellent administrator and a first-rate man of business. For twelve years, he was the President of his own board of trustees, and the success of his foundation was his chief interest in life. Such an arrangement would not always be discreet or even safe. In his case, it was of incalculable advantage to the Academy, and, indeed, it may well be reckoned as a great part of his benefaction. For Dr. Phillips may best be described by an adjective less often applied to persons than it used to be: he was emphatically a "wise" man. The provisions of the act of incorporation are significant. The Academy was established at Exeter, but a majority of the trustees were to be non-residents;

* In his "Historical Sketch of The Phillips Exeter Academy" (1883), an interesting book, which I have freely utilized in this paper.

and the board could at any time, by a two-thirds vote, remove the institution to any other place in New Hampshire which they should judge "best calculated for carrying into effectual execution the intention of the Founder." Obviously, Dr. Phillips understood the dangers of local control, and he forestalled them in the most effectual way. It was not a town school that he contemplated, but a national institution. Not less prudent and far-seeing was that other limitation which prescribed that a majority of the trustees should be laymen. Dr. Phillips belonged to a clerical family and he was a devout man, but he did not wish the Academy to be dominated by the church. It is a satisfaction to know that his precautions have been effectual, and that they have worked without friction. The Academy has attracted boys in great numbers from every part of our country. Its relations with the town, though cordial, have never interfered with its policy, and no religious complications have hampered its development.

The sessions of the Academy were opened in 1783 in a small building of four rooms. The preceptor was William Woodbridge, who received a salary of £100, and had one assistant. He was succeeded in 1788 by Benjamin Abbot, who held the principalship for fifty years. On his retirement, in 1838, the office was conferred on Gideon L. Soule, who had been associated with him for sixteen years, and who was at that time Professor of Ancient Languages. Dr. Soule retained the position till 1873. Thus the terms of service of these two eminent teachers covered nearly a century, and include the history of the Academy from the lifetime of the founder almost to the present day. Such continuity of tradition is rare enough in America, and it accounts in large measure for the distinctive character of the school.

It must not be supposed, however, that Dr. Abbot and Dr. Soule* were mere transmitters of tradition. Both were men of strong individuality, and each impressed himself upon the Academy. The wisdom of the founder had made ample provision, in the flexibility of his design, for easy and symmetrical expansion, and innovations came—like those which Lord Bacon ascribes to Time, the great innovator—steadily and gradually, without shock or surprise, as the school adapted itself from year to year to the changes which the advance of the country brought with it.

* Dr. Abbot received the degree of LL.D. from Dartmouth in 1811; Dr. Soule was similarly honored by Harvard in 1856.

Dr. Abbot was not merely a good teacher: he was a close student of educational methods and himself an originator. There was little for him to learn from his American contemporaries. He could not follow; he had to lead. It is particularly interesting, therefore, to find that he turned to England for guidance. Not content with what he could find in print, he requested a friend to examine the great English public schools and to give him a full account of their system as it appeared in actual operation. The mission was well performed. Dr. Abbot derived valuable suggestions from his friend's report and used them with characteristic skill and good sense. He understood the wide difference between our social organization and that of England, and saw clearly that it was impossible, as well as undesirable, to reproduce an English school on American soil. He was quite aware that it is easier to copy than to adapt and assimilate, but he saw clearly that mere imitation would not solve the complicated problem on which he was engaged. The lesson that he taught has never been forgotten at Exeter. Analogies have often been traced between the English public schools and The Phillips Exeter Academy; differences are equally noticeable. Both the one and the other are elements in the success of this truly American institution,—American in the best sense, since it seems to be peculiarly fitted to the needs and the abilities of American boys.

Two changes of moment were introduced while Dr. Soule was principal. In 1857, the powers of a Faculty were conferred upon the instructors, and in 1858 the students were relieved of the requirement of preparing their lessons in the schoolroom under the eye of a teacher. It was a wise and considerate daring that prompted these reforms, and they have done much to confirm that spirit of self-reliance which is one of the most admirable points of the Exeter training. A young instructor at Exeter is not a mere agent of the Principal. He is responsible to the Academy at large and to his own conscience. He can count upon the advice of his older colleagues, but he is neither coddled by them nor overborne by their authority. He governs his own classes and has his share in the general administration. He speaks and votes in the weekly Faculty meetings, at which questions of discipline are decided and matters of policy freely discussed. The Principal has, of course, much influence, but he expects every member of the Faculty to say what he thinks, and he is quite pre-

pared to be outvoted on occasion. The writer was for several years a member of the Exeter Faculty, and he can testify that the debates are as frank and fearless as it is possible for those of a deliberative assembly to be. The students know this, and they feel a corresponding respect for the decisions of the governing body. They are aware that they are living under a constitutional government, not under a benevolent despotism, and the knowledge does them good. The position of an instructor is dignified, for his tenure of office does not depend on subserviency or complaisance. Thus it is easy for the Academy to secure good teachers, and to keep them. Long terms of service are the rule at Exeter. Professor Wentworth taught there from 1858 to 1892, and is now a member of the Board of Trustees. His classmate, Professor Cilley, was in active service from 1859 until his lamented death in 1899. The Professor of English, Mr. J. A. Tufts, is now completing his twenty-fifth year of continuous service. Many other names in the long roll of past and present members of the Faculty show a record of from ten to fifteen years of fruitful instruction.

The second reform was equally important. The boy is responsible for his lesson, and he knows that his instructor will hold him accountable for it, at the set time, and will exact it to the uttermost farthing. Preparation for the recitation is the boy's own affair. Thus he feels under a far greater obligation than any that could bind him if he did his studying under the tutorial eye. The question is not, "How many hours have you spent in study?" It is, "Do you know your lesson?" Failure to be ready is not a mere peccadillo. It is a breach of trust, and, if it occurs often, it is taken—and the boy knows it will be taken—as evidence that he is not a good citizen of the academic community. This test is constantly applied. It is an accepted principle that The Phillips Exeter Academy is not meant for persons who need surveillance. It is meant for manly boys, and its discipline has proved to be singularly well-adapted to bring out those qualities which are requisite in the citizens of a republic. The students are under such control as ought to suffice for well-intentioned and healthy-minded young Americans. When, in a given case, this measure of oversight is not sufficient, the boy must leave the school.

It sometimes happens that a pupil, through no fault of his own, is mentally or physically unable to keep pace with his classmates. Such a boy, after a fair trial, is expected either to drop

into a lower class or to leave the Academy. This is not dismissal. It carries no disgrace with it. The boy is simply out of place, and his parents are advised to withdraw him. This again is well understood by the students. There is a sharp distinction in their minds between dismissal for sins against good order and the quiet disappearance of an unoffending but ineffectual classmate. They acquiesce in the process of natural selection, recognizing the survival of the fittest as a law that works well—as the law that makes the Academy a school to which they are proud to belong. The effects of the Exeter method are particularly noticeable in the perilous passage from school to college. The Exeter graduate feels no such shock in the transition as is experienced by many boys who go to college from schools conducted on a more repressive and paternal system. He has learned to govern himself.

It must not be supposed, however, that there is anything hard or mechanical in the workings of the system described. The relations between the pupils and the instructors are cordial. Every student society—and there are several—has one or more “Faculty members,” elected by the undergraduates themselves. The students are in constant association with the teachers, and mutual trust and helpfulness pervade the institution. There is no lawlessness; no lack of proper control. Indeed, the very fact that the students have to work, and work hard, if they are to stay in the Academy is itself a guaranty of good behavior. There is little student opinion in favor of laziness. It is a merit in the student’s code to get one’s lessons. Nobody is ashamed of making a good recitation. Good scholarship at Exeter gives a boy prestige among his fellows, no less than prowess in the baseball field or on the gridiron.

Physical culture is well attended to at Exeter. The school has long been famous for its interest in athletic sports, and the Campus, as the athletic field is called, is in good weather an animated place. Out-of-door life is very pleasant at Exeter in the spring and fall. The country is beautiful, full of woods and streams; and the upper river gives every facility for boating. There is a large and well-equipped gymnasium, under the charge of a competent instructor, and systematic exercise is a part of every student’s life. Merrill Hall, the recent gift of Dr. Abner L. Merrill, is a welcome addition to the social facilities of the Academy. It affords commodious quarters for the two main

literary societies, the Golden Branch and the G. L. Soule, each of which has a considerable library; and one whole story is taken up by a large room for reading and indoor recreation. Thus the Hall fills in some degree the place supplied by the Harvard Union at Cambridge.

For many years after the foundation of the Academy, the students boarded and lodged with private families in the town. This arrangement became insufficient for the needs of the school, and a number of dormitories have been built. There are now five such halls. No one is compelled to live in these buildings, and a considerable number of the students still lodge in private houses, but the dormitories are deservedly popular and are more and more resorted to. Dunbar Hall is reserved, in the main, for the younger boys, of whom it accommodates about thirty. It contains dining and recreation rooms as well as chambers, and is under the supervision of two married instructors, who, with their families, live in the building. The development of the dormitory system is chiefly the work of the present Principal, Mr. Harlan P. Amen. It has centralized and simplified the administration of the Academy, but has not weakened the fine spirit of self-reliance so characteristic of the place from the beginning.

The Phillips Exeter Academy has always been famous for its democracy. Some of the students are poor, and a considerable portion of the endowment goes to scholarships, in accordance with the founder's wishes and with the provisions of other special gifts and bequests. But there is no barrier, real or imaginary, between the indigent and the well-to-do. Generous intellectual rivalry among healthy boys is fatal to artificial distinctions. The son of wealthy parents meets his match in the classroom and on the Campus in a fellow-student who is working his way. On the other hand, the ignorant contempt for the rich which sometimes manifests itself in young men whose horizon has been narrow is quickly corrected in this atmosphere. The good scholars are not all foundationers, and the poor boy often finds his intellectual rival in his well-to-do comrade. Such association is good training for American citizens. Besides, Exeter is an old and dignified town, with a society of its own and well-sustained traditions. Hence the students are not likely to feel superior to their surroundings. They have no temptation, as they might have in a less cultivated community, to exaggerate their own importance.

To maintain the democratic spirit is the constant care of the governing boards. Alumni Hall, now almost finished, should prove a powerful means to this end. This is intended as a general dining-hall; and, though there will be no compulsion, its advantages will certainly appeal to a large number of the students. The ample beneficiary fund of the Academy will enable the poorest to board at Alumni Hall on the same terms as the richest.

The main building, or recitation hall, of the Academy was erected in 1872 to replace the "Old Academy," a large frame structure put up in 1794, enlarged in 1821, and destroyed by fire in 1870. There are separate buildings for the laboratories of physics and of chemistry. The chapel, which occupies the greater part of the upper story of the main building, is one of the most interesting places in New England. The walls are nearly covered with portraits, most of them in oils, of eminent alumni and others who have been connected with the institution in the century and a quarter of its life. These paintings bring forcibly to mind the service which this venerable foundation has done for the Republic. Few seminaries of learning have so large a roll of distinguished sons. Twenty years ago the list, as summed up by Governor Prescott of New Hampshire, included five Ministers Plenipotentiary, seven Cabinet Ministers, eight Senators, twenty Representatives in Congress, twelve Governors of States, one Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, four Chief Justices of the Supreme Courts of States, four Justices of the Circuit Courts of the United States, three Attorney-Generals of States, nine College Presidents, fifty-two College Professors, 130 clergymen, 245 teachers, 510 attorneys at law, 262 physicians, thirty-six authors (including four eminent historians), 260 merchants, thirty-three Captains in the mercantile marine, three Major-Generals in the Army, two Rear-Admirals in the Navy, and scores of officers in both departments of the service. Bushrod and Augustine Washington, Francis Lightfoot Lee, Edward Everett, Daniel Webster, Cass, John P. Hale, Butler, Bancroft, Sparks, Parkman, Saltonstall, are names which suggest how closely the career of this great school is bound up with the history of our country. The past of The Phillips Exeter Academy is illustrious, and the future is bright with increasing promise.

G. L. KITTEDGE.